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JORDAN'S 'COMPARATIVE RELIGION'

Comparative Religion: Its Adjuncts and Allies. By LOUIS HENRY JORDAN, B.D. (Edin.). London: Humphrey Milford, OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1915. pp. xxxii + 574.

THE 'adjuncts and allies' of comparative religion are anthropology, ethnology, sociology, archaeology, mythology, philology, psychology, and history of religions, and the purpose of the present volume is to indicate the relation of these sciences to comparative religion, and to point out how, and in how far they are in position to promote or retard its progress and development. More especially, the author wants to unfold the process by which comparative religion, 'which is destined to become one of the leading studies of the future', is developing into a separate, self-reliant and independent science. This he attempts to accomplish by a survey of the publications in the cognate and subsidiary sciences which appeared all over the world during the four years between 1910 and 1914, and a critical estimate of the contributions made by them towards promoting the growth and greater stability of the study of comparative religion. To this end the author passes under review some five hundred publications, one third of which, consisting of the more important books, is separately examined and discussed, while the others are grouped under the heading, 'Supplementary volumes', giving names of authors, titles, and place and date of publication.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, entitled 'Avenues of Approach' (pp. 1-322), examines the works in the eight disciplines enumerated above. All these studies engage more or less in investigations which throw light upon religion, but not one of them concentrates its attention upon the facts of religion. They merely furnish comparative religion with the raw material, as it were. History of religions, which is frequently

'confounded' with comparative religion, is the 'immediate precursor, the logical starting-point, and the vestibule' of comparative religion. The difference between them, however, is that the former concerns itself with the facts, the latter is in search of the laws and the hidden relationships of the facts, and seeks to give a coherent and consistent account of the result and the operation of those laws.

Part II, headed 'The Transition' (pp. 325-506), discusses:

- (1) The evolution of the scientific method ;
- (2) Apologetic treatises ;
- (3) Translations of representative portions of sacred texts ;
- (4) Transactions of Congresses and learned societies ;
- (5) Encyclopedias, periodical literature, special works, &c. ;
and
- (6) Centres of subsidiary study: Schools of religions and museums.

The books examined in this group are an advance on those of Part I inasmuch as they 'embody, in varying degrees, actual specimens of comparative religion'.

Part III, 'Comparative religion' (pp. 507-522), summarizes the results and the value of the contributions of the subsidiary sciences to comparative religion, consisting (1) in restricting its area, and (2) in determining its legitimate scope.

The author is a veteran worker in the field of comparative religion. He has written three former volumes on the subject and three more are to follow, besides issuing a quadrennial publication under the title of 'Comparative Religion: A survey of its recent literature'. But he has the enthusiasm, emphasis and insistence of a pioneer and discoverer. His endless reiteration of the assertion of the separateness and distinctiveness of comparative religion from all other sciences, and his aggressive defence of the sovereign independence and 'indefeasible authority' of this 'new science', the 'science of the twentieth century', the 'science of the future', is somewhat of a waste of munitions. There have been 'comparativists' with us for some time. But he also has some pertinent and suggestive remarks worthy of

consideration by those engaged in the study of mankind: 'The important fact about the human race is not that it has cherished all the irrational and debasing superstitions registered in *The Golden Bough*, but that it has, in the main, transmuted and transformed them' (p. 8). 'It may be a despicable thing to sneer at another man's faith; but it is equally bad form, and it exhibits equally bad judgement, to overpraise one's own' (p. 369). 'Which religion is "the best", absolutely considered, is a problem which no man need ever hope to solve; the solution lies far beyond his reach' (p. 369). 'It is not more a mistake to declare that this new science [comparative religion] reveals the equal futility of all religions than to affirm that it provides an unanswerable demonstration of the pre-eminence of (say) the Christian religion' (p. 372).

But the chief value of this volume lies in the classified bibliography which will be found very serviceable by all who are in one way or another interested in the study of religions. At the same time this array of publications presents an impressive view of the many-sidedness of religion and of the infinitude of tangents at which it touches human life.

A carefully-prepared index of authors, bibliographies and subjects, filling fifty-two pages, renders the book easy and convenient for reference.

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